



PRESS OFFICE

NEWS RELEASE

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Women Take Top Honors During 23rd Annual Minority Enterprise Development Week

Women-Owned Businesses and Navy Official Honored by the U.S. Small Business Administration for Their Accomplishments

WASHINGTON – Three women-owned, minority-owned businesses and a Department of Navy official swept all top award categories and were honored by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for their superior business achievements and outstanding commitment to federal procurement during the 23rd National Minority Enterprise Development (MED) Week celebration in Washington, D.C. today.

“These four phenomenal women are prime examples of why the number of women and minority-owned businesses is growing faster than any other sector in the nation,” SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto said. “They are employers, they create job growth and they are professionals and visionaries who contribute significantly to our nation’s economy. Today it is my pleasure to recognize these outstanding women for their entrepreneurial achievements and tremendous contributions to the nation’s economy.”

The winner of the *National 8(a) Minority Small Business of the Year Award* is Lori Nevarez, president of Innovar Environmental of Littleton, CO. Dr. Maria J. Hankerson, president of Systems Assessment & Research, Inc. of Lanham, MD, and Claudia F. Fabela, president of TDF Corporation of Rock Island, IL, are the recipients of the *8(a) Graduate of the Year Award*. Ann Howell, deputy small and disadvantaged business specialist for the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center in Charleston, SC, is the winner of the *Administrator’s Leadership Award*. The *Administrator’s Leadership Award* recognizes the recipient for her tireless efforts and unwavering commitment on behalf of the nation’s minority small business community.

Three of the four top award recipients were participants in the SBA’s 8(a) Program – a business development program that provides management and technical assistance, networking and federal contracting opportunities to socially and economically disadvantaged businesses.

National Minority Small Business Person of the Year

**Lori Lynn Nevarez, President
Innovar Environmental, Inc.**

Innovar is a woman-owned, 8(a) and HUBZone-certified minority business with a vast area of expertise in environmental consulting and construction. In Spanish, “Innovar” means to innovate or be innovative. The company’s name is indicative of Nevarez’s objective to ensure that her clients receive quality service based on sound scientific principles using innovative solutions. Innovar provides services to federal and state government agencies, commercial and industrial firms and larger engineering and environmental firms.

National 8(a) Graduate of the Year

Dr. Maria J. Hankerson, Ph.D

Systems Assessment & Research, Inc. (SAR Corp)

SAR Corp is a woman-owned business that graduated from the SBA's 8(a) program in 2003. The company has two operational divisions, research and evaluation and human resources staffing and management services. The staffing division provides high-level medical staffing services for military and commercial institutions and provides executive and professional staffing services for business environments. In November 2004, the Washington Business Journal recognized Dr. Hankerson as one of the region's most influential business women at the inaugural, "**Women Who Mean Business**" award. Honorees were selected from a pool of more than 200 regional nominations. In June 2003, Dr. Hankerson also received the "**Woman Entrepreneur of the Year**" award from the D.C. Chamber of Commerce. Other awards and accolades include "**50 Influential Minorities in Business**" award from the Minority Business and Professional Network and a feature story in the Washington Business Journal as an "Innovative Small Business."

National 8(a) Graduate of the Year

Claudia F. Fabela, President

TDF Corporation

Fabela founded TDF Corporation in 1989, and went on to do business primarily with Fortune 100 clients and the military. In 1996, TDF opened its federal division in Rock Island, IL to service the U.S. Army. Fabela started TDF with 30 employees, but now employs more than 130 people. In 1997, Fabela received the Illinois *Minority Small Business Person of the Year* from the SBA. In 2000, Fabela was voted one of the "*25 Most Influential Women in Business*" by the DuPage Business Ledger. TDF has been listed in the Hispanic Business 500 every year since 2000. TDF was also named in the "*Top 100 Fastest Growing Hispanic Businesses*," which is also published by Hispanic Business magazine.

Administrator's Leadership Award

Ann Howell, Deputy Small and Disadvantaged Business Specialist

for Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWARSYSCEN), Charleston, SC

Ann Howell has a passion to help small businesses grow to be successful and is a champion for small business participation in government contracting. She has over 31 years of experience in government contracting, serving the U.S. Navy in five of its major organizations. Howell's contracting expertise helped SPAWARSYSCEN receive the first "*Outstanding Compliance Review*" award ever given by the SBA. The outstanding rating was due in part to Howell's leadership, the excellent written policy, and evident institutionalization of the small business program throughout the center. Howell's vigilance and dedication has resulted in approximately 46 percent of SPAWARSYSCEN's prime contract awards going to small and small disadvantaged business, for a total of approximately \$1 billion. Howell has provided the motivation for management and technical and contracting professionals of the command to ensure that small and small disadvantaged business owners are given every opportunity to participate in government contracting.

The awards were part of this week's MED Week Conference in Washington, D.C. The SBA's Office of Government Contracting and Business Development took part in the event with the Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency.

For more information, contact the MED Week 2005 office at 1-877-MEDWEEK or visit the Web site at www.medweek.gov or SBA's Web page at <http://www.sba.gov/medweek2005/index.html> .

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